

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the above-identified application in view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

A. Claim Status / Explanation of Amendments

Claims 34-37 are pending and were rejected. As to the merits, claims 34 and 36-37 were rejected pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,896,973 to Sugata ("Sugata") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,120,394 to Mukai ("Mukai"). [8/13/07 Office Action, p. 2]. Claims 34-37 were rejected pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,989,031 to Kamiya ("Kamiya") in view of Mukai and U.S. Patent No. 6,616,773 to Kuzumoto, et al. ("Kuzumoto"). [8/13/07 Office Action, p. 3]. Applicant assumes that the second patent number attributed to Mukai which the Office Action indicated as U.S. Patent No. 4,989,031 should actually be U.S. Patent No. 5,120,394.

By this paper, claims 34 and 36 are amended. Claim 34 is amended to recite, *inter alia*, a fifth step for "exhausting the oxygen gas or the ozone gas in the first container so that a nitrogen containing ambience is produced in each of the first and second containers" and a sixth step for "unloading the article from the first and second containers, after keeping the article in the nitrogen containing ambience for a predetermined time." Claim 36 is amended such that "optional" is changed to "optical" to correct a typographical error. Support for the amendments to claim 34 can be found throughout the application as originally filed including, for example, p. 18, ln. 18 to p. 19, ln. 19 and Fig. 4.

No new matter will be introduced into this application by entry of these amendments. Entry is respectfully requested.

B. Claims 34 and 36-37 are Patentable over Sugata in view of Mukai

Claims 34 and 36-37 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being obvious over Sugata in view of Mukai. Applicants note that Sugata has a U.S. filing date of August 23, 2001. The present application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119 to Japanese Application No. 2001-035113 which was filed on February 13, 2001, thereby antedating Sugata's U.S. filing date of August 23, 2001. Nonetheless, the Section 103 rejection is overcome and traversed on the merits as follows.

The Office Action recognizes that Sugata fails to teach a "light source disposed inside the first container but outside the second container" as recited in Applicants' pending claim 34. [8/13/07 Office Action, p. 2-3]. In attempting to overcome this deficiency the Office Action relies on Mukai which is directed, *inter alia*, to a process wherein a substrate is placed in a reactor chamber, a reactive gas is flowed through the chamber, and the substrate surface is then irradiated with ultraviolet light from a source located outside the chamber. [Mukai, Col. 5, lns. 1-13]. The Office Action then contends it would have been obvious to modify Sugata such that the light source is disposed inside the first container, but outside the second container as taught by Mukai. [8/13/07 Office Action, p. 3].

Applicants, however, disclose a rinsing method further comprising fifth and sixth steps for "exhausting the oxygen gas or the ozone gas in the first container so that a nitrogen containing ambience is produced in each of the first and second containers" and for "unloading the article from the first and second containers, after keeping the article in the nitrogen containing ambience for a predetermined time" as recited in amended claim 34. Since the subsequent steps of forming a nitrogen ambience in the first container followed by keeping the article in the nitrogen ambience for a predetermined time are neither taught, suggested, nor

disclosed by Sugata or Mukai, whether alone or in combination, claim 34 is patentably distinct for at least this reason. Dependent claims 36-37 are asserted to be in condition for allowance for at least similar reasons. Accordingly, the Section 103(a) rejection of claims 34 and 36-37 is respectfully traversed.

C. Claims 34-37 are Patentable over Kamiya in view of Mukai and Kuzumoto

The rejection of claims 34-37 as allegedly being obvious over Kamiya in view of Mukai and Kuzumoto is respectfully traversed. As set forth in detail below, Kamiya, Mukai and Kuzumoto, whether alone or in combination, do not teach, disclose, or suggest each and every element of these claims. [MPEP 2143.03]. Accordingly, the Section 103 rejection is respectfully traversed.

At the outset, the Office Action recognizes and asserts that Kamiya fails to disclose Applicants' steps of "irradiating the article with ultraviolet rays ... introducing a nitrogen gas into the second container, and exhausting the oxygen gas or ozone gas in the second container, to exchange an ambience of the second container" as recited in pending claim 34. In attempting to overcome these deficiencies, the Office Action relies on Mukai and Kuzumoto and contends it would have been obvious to modify Kamiya to include a step of supplying ultraviolet rays as taught by Mukai and a step of introducing a nitrogen gas to the second container to replace oxygen or ozone as taught by Kuzumoto. [8/13/07 Office Action, p. 4].

Kuzumoto discloses, *inter alia*, the steps of heating a substrate in a chamber, flowing ozone gas through the chamber, and then purging the chamber with nitrogen gas. [Kuzumoto, Col. 6, ln. 51 to Col. 7, ln. 5]. However, neither Mukai nor Kuzumoto disclose Applicants' fifth and sixth steps which further dispel oxygen by also exhausting the first container and producing a nitrogen ambience in *both* first and second containers. That is, Mukai and Kuzumoto fail to

fail to teach, disclose, or suggest a fifth step of "exhausting the oxygen gas or the ozone gas in the first container so that a nitrogen containing ambience is produced in each of the first and second containers" followed by a sixth step of "unloading the article from the first and second containers, after keeping the article in the nitrogen containing ambience for a predetermined time" as recited in Applicants' amended claim 34.

Since Kamiya, Mukai, and Kuzumoto - whether alone or in combination - fail to teach, disclose, or suggest each and every claim limitation, claim 34 is asserted to be patentably distinct. By their very nature, each of the dependent claims must necessarily include the above aspects of amended claim 34. Thus, none of claims 35-37 are obvious in light of the above itemized references whether taken alone or in combination and the Section 103(a) rejection of claims 34-37 for obviousness should be withdrawn. Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims are now allowable for the above reasons and early, favorable action in that regard is requested.

Applicants have chosen in the interest of expediting prosecution of this patent application to distinguish the cited documents from the pending claims as set forth above. These statements should not be regarded in any way as admissions that the cited documents are, in fact, prior art. Finally, Applicants have not specifically addressed the rejections of the dependent claims. Applicants respectfully submit that the independent claim, from which they depend, is in condition for allowance as set forth above. Accordingly, the dependent claims also are in condition for allowance. Applicants, however, reserve the right to address such rejections of the dependent claims in the future as appropriate.

CONCLUSION

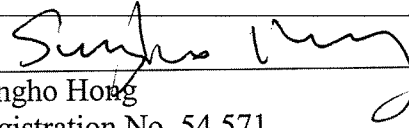
For the above-stated reasons, this application is respectfully asserted to be in condition for allowance. An early and favorable examination on the merits is earnestly solicited. In the event that a telephone conference would facilitate the examination of this application in any way, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the number provided.

THE COMMISSIONER IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO CHARGE ANY ADDITIONAL FEES WHICH MAY BE REQUIRED FOR THE TIMELY CONSIDERATION OF THIS AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 AND 1.17, OR CREDIT ANY OVERPAYMENT TO DEPOSIT ACCOUNT NO. 13-4500, ORDER NO. 1232-4819.

Respectfully submitted,
MORGAN & FINNEGAN, L.L.P.

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By: _____


Sungho Hong
Registration No. 54,571

Correspondence Address:

MORGAN & FINNEGAN, L.L.P.
3 World Financial Center
New York, NY 10281-2101
(212) 415-8700 Telephone
(212) 415-8701 Facsimile